

## FISHERIES IN ALASKA.

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JANUARY 29, 1921.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. WHITE of Maine, from the Committee on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries, submitted the following

### REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 15665.]

The Committee on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries, to which was referred H. R. 15665, having conducted hearings thereon and having considered the same, report the bill to the House with the recommendation that it do pass with the following amendments: On page 1, in line 2, following the enacting clause with the words "That section 6 of the act of Congress entitled 'An act for the protection and regulation of the fisheries of Alaska,' approved June 26, 1906, is hereby amended to read as follows:"

On page 2, lines 9 and 10, strike out the words "No order made under this section shall be effective before the next calendar year after same is made."

The purpose of the bill is to extend the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Commerce over the fisheries of Alaska. The subject matter was brought to the attention of the committee through the introduction into the House by Mr. Grigsby, of Alaska, of H. R. 13334, a bill to prohibit fishing for salmon in the Yukon River, its adjacent waters, and tributary waters for the purpose of canning and export from Alaska.

Upon H. R. 13334 hearings were had by the subcommittee on fisheries of the Committee on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries. The bill reported to the House is in the nature of a substitute for H. R. 13334. It has the unanimous approval of the Committee on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries.

The substantial facts which seem to the committee to justify this legislation are as follows:

The Carlisle Packing Co. established a cannery on one of the mouths of the Yukon River in 1918. Following the establishment of this cannery and the conducting of fishing operations by it there was a notable diminution in the run of salmon in the Yukon River during the year 1919. It seems to be clearly established that the

Indians and others upon portions of this river are in a large degree dependent upon the salmon of the stream for their food supply for themselves and for their dogs. The number of the people so dependent on the salmon is estimated at from five to ten thousand. It was the claim of those supporting the Grigsby bill that the smaller salmon run of 1919, and the resulting food shortage, was chargeable to the cannery and its operations. The cannery operators, while admitting the small run for that year, attributed it to natural causes, asserting that it was only one of the lean years which recur from time to time in the movement of salmon and other fish.

During the fall of 1920 hearings were had at Seattle and in Alaska by the Department of Commerce, to determine the advisability of amending the existing regulations and of applying new restrictions upon fishing in various waters under authority lodged in the Secretary of Commerce by the act of June 26, 1906. Exhaustive investigations had been conducted on the Yukon by representatives of the Department of Commerce during the preceding months. The findings of the department's experts indicated the inability of the Yukon River to support a commercial salmon fishery for export purposes without endangering the supply of salmon in the stream. As a result of these findings and upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of Fisheries, the Secretary of Commerce, under date of December 18, 1920, prohibited fishing in the Yukon River and within 500 yards of each mouth of the river for other than local use in Alaska after September 1, 1921.

This action of the department, made in conformity with the act of June 26, 1906, rendered it unnecessary and unwise, in the judgment of your committee, to act favorably upon the Grigsby bill, but the evidence before us presented a situation which seemed to call for an extension of the powers of the department. Under the act of 1906, the authority of the Secretary of Commerce for the purposes of this act does not extend beyond 500 yards of the mouth of a stream. The department urges, and your committee is satisfied, that this limitation is too narrow, and the bill reported extends the jurisdiction of the department to the 3-mile limit, and this is one of the changes proposed in the present law.

The original act authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to act only when in his judgment fishing operations indicate that the number of salmon taken in a stream is larger than the natural production of salmon in that stream. Your committee recommends that he may have authority to act, not only in such a case, but also when he finds that fishing for salmon in any manner is liable to so diminish the run of salmon in a stream as to endanger the food supply of natives or others living on the stream and dependent on salmon for food, or is liable to deplete the supply of fish therein.

The committee has amended the existing law in one other particular. Section 6 under consideration provides that no order made under it shall be effective before the next calendar year after the same has been made. The committee recommends that this provision be stricken from the law. Its existence might result in a delay during which incalculable harm could be done to the fisheries. It is believed that the time for the taking effect of any regulations put into force by the Secretary of Commerce may safely be left to his discretion.